



Sol and Luna
from the Introductorium
in astronomiam.
Augsburg, Erhard Ratdolt,
1489

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DEVELOPMENT OF CALENDAR ILLUSTRATION

In ancient times, man had no other means of measuring time than by the apparently eternally recurring procession of the stars. When the periods of the constellations were registered, the foundations of the calendar were established. The purpose of the calendar was to create an instrument which should instruct the people as to the times of religious festivals and the seasons of agricultural labors. The two main heavenly bodies, sun and moon, served for the first measurements of time. According to the ideas of the ancients, the circuit of the sun about the earth gave the measurement of day and night, the circuit of the moon the measure for a month, the four quarters of the moon the measure for a week. Twelve circuits of the moon gave us the lunar year.

The calendar illustrators of early times could not do anything with these abstract conceptions of time and therefore invented symbols for the various periods in question. The signs of the zodiac came into being. The beginnings of the pictorial delineations of the zodiac are unknown. Sometimes they are attributed to the Chinese, sometimes to the inhabitants of Atlantis. The zodiac is composed of the symbols for the twelve main constellations passed by the sun in the course of a lunar year. That only twelve constellations were chosen probably came about in order to harmonize with the twelve circuits of the moon. Later the zodiac was partially replaced by other symbols and figures, namely: Virgo, Aquarius, the Heavenly Twins, Sagittarius and the Scales. The oldest picture calendar known to us is the frieze of the Panagia Gorcopiko, belonging to the epoch of Hellenic art. Here the calculation of time is symbolized by the zodiac, while other scenes depict human doings in the various seasons. In addition to the zodiac, the Greeks introduced the circle of the twelve gods. In the Louvre in Paris the so-called Gabinic Ara is preserved, a Greek calendar in which the attributes of the twelve deities are combined pictorially with the twelve signs of the zodiac.

APIANVS LECTORI